

About the agency

The Federal Emergency Management Agency is the federal agency in charge of helping people before and after a disaster. The agency, usually just called FEMA, is called in to help when the President declares a disaster. Disasters are “declared” after hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, earthquakes or other events strike a community. The Governor of the state must ask for help from the President before FEMA can respond.

FEMA workers help disaster victims find a place to stay if their home was damaged or destroyed. FEMA also helps repair homes and works with the city officials to fix public buildings that have been damaged.

Just as important, FEMA also helps people BEFORE a disaster so they will be ready. FEMA teaches people how to prepare for a disaster and how to make their homes safer. And FEMA works with communities to help them build safer, stronger buildings that are less likely to be damaged. FEMA also trains firefighters and emergency workers, and runs a flood insurance program. FEMA is an EXECUTIVE BRANCH agency, which means it reports to the President of the United States. Congress provides its budget each year, including money set aside in case it is needed to help people hurt by disasters.

More facts and stats:

- FEMA was created in 1979, when President Jimmy Carter put together five different agencies and four different programs to create one agency dedicated to planning for and helping after an emergency.
- FEMA headquarters is located in Washington, D.C.
- FEMA has 10 regional offices across the country.
- FEMA is a small agency with only 2,600 full time workers. But there are nearly 4,000 other people called Disaster Assistance Employees. These employees are on stand-by to respond after a disaster happens. They travel to the disaster and may live there for weeks or even months while a community recovers.
- Millions of people are affected by disasters each year. In 1996, FEMA responded to 75 major disasters and eight emergencies.
- FEMA works with the American Red Cross and many other government agencies to help people who have been through a disaster.

Message from Director James Lee Witt

Unfortunately, there is not much that can stop Mother Nature. Disasters like earthquakes, tornadoes, floods and hurricanes do happen and do hurt people and their communities.

But there are many things you can do to PREPARE for a disaster and to reduce your risk so your home may not be damaged. It is smart to be prepared! And it is smart to know as much as you can about what kinds of disasters might happen where you live. This WEB site was designed especially for children so that you can learn about disasters and what to do if one happens where you live. The more you know, the better off you will be. And you will probably learn things even your parents and teachers don't know! Tell them what you have learned and tell others about this WEB site.

What did you learn?

Who is the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency? James Lee Witt

What is the abbreviation for the Federal Emergency Management Agency? FEMA

What is an Executive Branch agency? A federal government agency that reports to the President

True or false – The Federal Emergency Management Agency helps people BEFORE and DURING and AFTER a disaster. (True)

Can you list two things that the Federal Emergency Management Agency does to help people? Help people find a place to stay after a disaster; help them repair their homes; work with city officials to fix public buildings that are damaged; teach people how to prepare and make their homes safer; trains firefighters and emergency workers; runs a flood insurance program.

Becoming a Disaster Action Kid

You can become a FEMA Disaster Action Kid and get a certificate from FEMA Director James Lee Witt! (You will probably need to be in grades three to six to complete the requirements.)

Being a Disaster Action Kid is Fun! And it's important. Disaster Action Kids are prepared! They know what items are needed in a disaster supply kit. They know how to protect their pet during a disaster. They also know what to do during each type of disaster, like a hurricane or a tornado or an earthquake. Being a Disaster Action Kid isn't easy, but it's worth it! Get your friends involved, too. All you need to do is read about disasters on this site, do the activities and test your knowledge. Below is your checklist of activities you must complete.

When your checklist is complete, you need to:

write your name, age, E-mail address and school in an E-mail message to **FEMA For Kids**. In the message, you need to write the two most important things you learned about disasters and write one kind of disaster that might happen where you live. You will receive an E-mailed certificate with your name on it!

Checklist:

What did you learn about FEMA?

What did you learn about Getting Prepared?

The Family Scavenger Hunt. [Click here for hunt](#)

Identify the problems in the Disaster House.

What did you learn about hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, fire and more?

Complete the Crossword Puzzle

Go to What's Happening Now and find a state near year with a current disaster. Click on the state and learn all there is to know about that disaster.

Check this site regularly for more games, quizzes and information. Tell your friends. Tell your family. Tell your teacher. Everyone needs to know about disasters.

Hurricanes, Earthquakes, Floods and More!

Disasters come in many shapes and sizes. Most are related to the weather. Some are predictable – like a hurricane. Some, like an earthquake, surprise us. It's good for you to know about the different kinds of disasters so you can be prepared! And although disasters themselves aren't fun, learning about them is!

Flooding

Flooding happens during heavy rains, when rivers overflow, when ocean waves come onshore, when snow melts too fast or when dams or levees break. Flooding may be only a few inches of water or it may cover a house to the rooftop. Floods that happen very quickly are called flashfloods. Flooding is the most common of all natural hazards. It can happen in every U.S. state and territory.

Important terms to know:

Flood Watch or Flash Flood Watch -- Flooding may happen soon. Stay tuned to the radio or television news for more information. If you hear a flash flood warning, talk to an adult immediately!

Flood Warning – You may be asked to evacuate. A flood may be happening or will very soon. Tell an adult if you hear a flood warning. If your area is having an evacuation, remember to bring your **Emergency Preparedness Kit** and make arrangements for your pets.

Flash Flood Warning – A flash flood is happening. You should get on high ground right away. Tell an adult!

Things to know during a flood:

If you have time, bring in outdoor or garden furniture. You should also move important things to a second story.

Stay away from flood water. It can be contaminated.

Do not walk through moving water. It can knock you off your feet. If you must walk through water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to test the ground in front of you.

Stay away from power lines that are on the ground.

Always keep your battery-powered radio with you so you know what is happening.

If you are scared, share your fears with an adult. Floods can be scary, but remember – the water ALWAYS goes away!

Hurricanes

Hurricanes are severe tropical storms that form in the southern Atlantic Ocean, Caribbean Sea, Gulf of Mexico, and in the eastern Pacific Ocean. Hurricanes gather heat and energy through contact with warm ocean waters. Evaporation from the seawater increases their power. Hurricanes rotate in a counter-clockwise direction around an “eye.” Hurricanes have winds at least 74 miles per hour. When they come onto land, the heavy rain, strong winds and heavy waves can damage buildings, trees and cars. The heavy waves are called a storm surge. Storm surges are very dangerous and a major reason why you MUST stay away from the ocean during a hurricane warning or hurricane.

Hurricane Classification

Hurricanes are classified into five categories, based on their wind speeds and potential to cause damage.

Category One – Winds 74-95 mph

Category Two – Winds 96-110 mph

Category Three – Winds 111-130 mph

Category Four – Winds 131-155 mph

Category Five – Winds greater than 155 mph

In the U.S., the hurricane season extends from June 1 to November 30, but they can happen any time of the year. Hurricanes are given names by the Weather Service. Some past hurricanes have been named: Opal, Andrew, Marilyn, Hugo and Fran. When severe storms form in the Pacific Ocean, they are called typhoons.

Important terms to know:

Hurricane Watch – A hurricane is possible within 36 hours. Stay tuned to the radio and television for more information. The Hurricane Center is tracking the storm and trying to predict where it may come ashore.

Hurricane Warning – A hurricane is expected within 24 hours. You may be told to evacuate. You and your family should begin making preparations to evacuate. If your area is having an evacuation, remember to bring your **Emergency Preparedness Kit**. Do not forget to make plans for your pets if you must evacuate.

A History of Big Hurricanes

Hurricane Carla: This hurricane hit on September 10, 1961. It struck the Texas coast. About 500,000 people were evacuated from the area. Winds near the center of the hurricane were estimated at 150 miles per hour. Damage was about \$2 billion (adjusted to 1990 dollars) and 46 people died.

Hurricane Betsy: This hurricane hit on September 8, 1965. It hit Florida first and then turned and hit the Louisiana coast. A total of 75 people lost their lives. The hurricane had winds as high as 160 miles per hour. In 1990 dollars, Betsy caused \$6.5 billion of damage – making it the third costliest hurricane in the U.S.

Hurricane Camille. This hurricane began on August 17, 1969. It was a Category 5 hurricane – the most powerful on the Saffir/Simpson scale with winds as high as 200 miles per hour. The hurricane hit the U.S. Gulf Coast, but also caused flooding in Virginia. About 250 people died because of the hurricane and the flooding. It was the fifth most costly disaster in U.S. history, with damage of \$5.2 billion (in 1990 dollars).

Hurricane Celia: This hurricane hit Texas on August 3, 1970 and caused \$1.6 billion in damage (in 1990 dollars). Very high winds damaged an airport and demolished a nearby mobile home park, but fortunately, only 11 people died.

Hurricane Gilbert: This hurricane hit on September 16, 1988. It was a Category 5 hurricane with winds as high as 140 miles per hour. It went through Jamaica, over the Yucatan peninsula of Mexico and came to the U.S. (Texas and Oklahoma) as a heavy rain storm. A total of 318 people were killed, and damage in Mexico was many billions of dollars (in 1990 dollars).

Hurricane Hugo:

Hurricane Andrew: This hurricane hit on August 26, 1992 in southern Florida. It then turned and hit Louisiana. More than a million people were evacuated. Heavy rains and tornadoes were part of the hurricane's destructive power. Andrew was the most expensive hurricane in the history of the U.S. About 20 people died.

Hurricane Marilyn:

Hurricane Fran:

Information courtesy of The National Hurricane Center

Things to know during a hurricane:

Listen to a radio or television for weather updates and stay in touch with your neighbors about evacuation orders.

Plan a place to meet your family in case you are separated during a disaster. Choose a friend or relative out of state for your family members to call to say they are OK.

Assemble your disaster supplies kit. Store extra water now! Check to make sure you have enough food.

Storm shutters are the best protection for windows. If your house does not have them, help an adult board up windows with 5/8" marine plywood. Tape does NOT prevent windows from breaking!

Bring in outside furniture. An adult should remove roof antennas, if they can.

Help an adult shut off your utilities – water, electricity and gas.

Make sure there is gas in the car and you are ready to evacuate immediately, if you are told to do so.

If you don't need to evacuate, be sure to STAY INDOORS during a hurricane. You could be hit by flying objects. Don't be fooled if there is a lull. It could be the eye of the storm, and the winds will come again.

Avoid using the phone except for an emergency so the phone lines can stay open for others.

If you do evacuate, do NOT go back home until local officials say it is safe.

Hurricanes can be very scary. If you are scared, be sure to talk to someone about it.

Hurricane Names

In 1953, the U.S. weather service began using women's names for hurricanes. In 1979, both women and men's names began to be used. Hurricanes get names to help with

tracking them (sometimes there may be more than one hurricane at a time and it can get confusing). Names also make it easier to remember when you are talking about a hurricane that hit a certain place at a certain time. Each year, the hurricane names are selected – one name for each letter of the alphabet, except Q, U and Z. Both women's and men's names are used. For Atlantic Ocean hurricanes, the names can be French, Spanish or English.

1997 names:

Ana
Bill
Claudette
Danny
Erika
Fabian
Grace
Henri
Isabel
Juan
Kate
Larry
Mindy
Nicholas
Odette
Peter
Rose
Sam
Teresa
Victor
Wanda

Do you see your name here?

Retired Hurricane Names

Sometimes names are “retired” if a hurricane has been really big and destructive. It's like when a sports jersey or number is retired after a really great athlete leaves a sport. When a name is retired it won't be used again. Here is a list of some of the names that have been retired:

Agnes
Alicia
Allen
Andrew
Anita
Audrey

Betsy
Bob
Camille
Carla
Carmen
Celia
Cleo
Connie
David
Diana
Donna
Elena
Gilbert
Gloria
Janet
Joan

Courtesy Chris Cappella, USA Today Information Network

Tornadoes

Tornadoes are nature's most violent storms. They come from powerful thunderstorms and appear as rotating, funnel-shaped clouds. Tornado winds can reach 300 miles per hour. They cause damage when they touch down on the ground. They can damage an area one mile wide and 50 miles long. Every state is at some risk, but states in "Tornado Alley" have the highest risk. (See the map). Tornadoes can form any time of the year, but the season runs from March to August. The ability to predict tornadoes is limited. Usually a community will have at least a few minutes warning. The most important thing to do is TAKE SHELTER if a tornado is nearby.

Important terms to know:

Tornado Watch – Tornadoes are possible. Stay turned to the radio or television news.

Tornado Warning – A tornado has been sighted. Take shelter immediately!

Things to know during a tornado:

Listen to a radio or television for weather updates. If you are told a tornado is coming you MUST seek shelter. An underground shelter is best, like a basement or storm shelter. If you don't have a basement, find an inside room or hallway or closet on the first floor AWAY FROM WINDOWS.

If you are at school during a tornado, follow what your teacher says.

If you are outside and cannot get inside lie flat in a ditch or ravine. Lie face down and cover your head with your hands.

If you are in a car, take shelter in a nearby building.

After a tornado, look out for broken glass and power lines that are downed. If you see someone who is injured, don't move them unless they are in immediate danger. Call for help right away!

Tornadoes can be very scary. If you are scared, be sure to talk to someone about it.

Earthquakes

Earthquakes are the shaking, rolling or sudden shock of the earth's surface. Earthquakes happen along "fault lines" in the earth's crust. Earthquakes can be felt over large areas although they usually last less than a minute. Earthquakes cannot be predicted – although scientists are working on it! There are many mistaken ideas about earthquakes.

Most of the time, you will notice an earthquake by a gentle shaking. You may notice hanging plants will sway or you will see objects wobbling on shelves. Sometimes you may hear a low rumbling noise or feel a sharp jolt. A survivor of the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco said the sensation was like riding a bicycle down a long flight of stairs. The intensity of an earthquake can be measured. Earthquakes below 4.0 usually do not cause any damage, and earthquakes below 2.0 usually can't be felt. Earthquakes over 5.0 on the scale can cause damage. A magnitude 6 earthquake is considered strong and a magnitude 7 is a major earthquake. The Northridge Earthquake, which hit Southern California in 1994, was magnitude 6.7. Earthquakes are sometimes called temblors, quakes, shakers or seismic activity. The most important thing to remember during an earthquake is to DROP and COVER. Drop and cover means to DROP to the floor and get under something for COVER.

Things to know about earthquakes:

If you are indoors during an earthquake, keep calm and take cover under a heavy table or desk. Stay away from glass, windows or anything that could fall, like a bookcase.

If you are outdoors, move away from buildings, street lights and utility wires.

If you are in a crowded public place, do NOT rush for the doors. Everyone will be doing that. Instead, take cover under something heavy and stay away from things that could fall on you. Stay calm. Do not get in an elevator during an earthquake!

After an earthquake, be prepared for after shocks. After shocks are follow-up earthquakes that are usually smaller than the first one. They are dangerous because they can cause things that are weakened in the first earthquake to fall down.

If you are home and you smell gas or hear a hissing or blowing sound, open a window and get out of the building right away. Tell your parent or another adult. It may mean that a gas line in your house has been broken.

Make sure you are wearing shoes after an earthquake, as there will be broken glass on the ground and inside your home.

If you are scared, share your fears with an adult. Earthquakes can be scary, but remember – they only last seconds.

Earthquakes: Facts and Fiction

Fiction: Earthquakes usually happen in the morning.

Fact: Earthquakes happen in both the day and the night. There is no pattern.

Fiction: There is such a thing as “earthquake weather.”

Fact: There is no connection between earthquakes and weather. Remember, earthquakes happen deep in the earth, far away from the weather!

Fiction: California will eventually fall into the ocean.

Fact: No! The motion of the Tectonic plates will not make California sink!

Fiction: Earthquakes are on the increase.

Fact: It may seem like we’re having more earthquakes because there are more reporting stations, but the truth is we’re not.

Fiction: We can prevent earthquakes from happening.

Fact: No. You can protect yourself by doing things to secure buildings, like your home, but earthquakes can’t be prevented – or predicted.

Information courtesy of the U.S. Geological Survey

History of Big Earthquakes

Northridge, California (20 miles from Los Angeles)

January 17, 1994

4:31 a.m.

6.7 Magnitude

Deaths 57

Injuries 9,000

Property Damage: \$15 billion

Loma Prieta Earthquake (south of San Francisco)

October 17, 1989

5:04 p.m.
Length of time: 15 seconds
Deaths 62
Injuries 3,757
Property Damage: More than \$6 billion

Coalinga, CA
May 2, 1983
Magnitude 6.4
Deaths 0
Injuries 47
Property damage: \$31 million

San Francisco, CA
April 18, 1906
5:12 a.m.
Magnitude 8.25
Length of time: 40 seconds
Deaths: 700 to 2,500 people
Note; The “Great San Francisco Earthquake” is one of the strongest ever recorded in North America. Much of the city was destroyed by the strong shaking, which toppled buildings, and by the fires that followed.

Information courtesy of U.S. Geological Survey

Fires

There are two kinds of fires that are important to prepare for: fires in buildings and wildfires. Fires in buildings are very dangerous. Every year, about 5,000 people in this country are killed by fires. FEMA has a WEB site dedicated to teaching kids what to do about a fire. One of the most important things to remember is that your house should have a working smoke detector. Look around your house to see if you have a smoke detector on every floor in the house. And check to see if it is working. Get help doing that from a parent or adult. Check also to see if your family has a working fire extinguisher.

Your family should have a fire plan of how to escape from your house if it is on fire. If you are caught in a fire REMEMBER, stay low to the ground where the smoke is not so heavy. NEVER hide during a fire. Always get out. And once you are out, stay out. DO NOT go back for a toy or anything else. Tell an adult if there is a person left behind in the burning house.

Wildfires are a danger for people who live in forest, prairies or wooded areas. These fires are sometimes started by lightning or by accident. They can move very fast and burn many acres. Remember, if there is a wildfire near you and your family is told to evacuate – go right away! And remember to bring your pets with you!

Winter Storms

In many areas of the country, winter can bring heavy snowfall and very cold temperatures. Heavy snow can block roads and cause downed power lines. The cold temperatures can be dangerous if you are not dressed correctly.

Important terms:

Freezing rain: Rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads and walkways.

Sleet: Rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching the ground. Sleet also causes roads to freeze and become slippery

Winter Weather Advisory: Cold, ice and snow are expected

Winter Storm Watch: Severe weather such as heavy snow or ice is possible in the next day or two.

Winter Storm Warning: Severe winter conditions have begun or will very soon.

Blizzard Warning: heavy snow and strong winds will produce a blinding snow, near zero visibility, deep drifts and life-threatening wind chill

Frost/Freeze Warning: Below freezing temperatures are expected.

What to know about winter storms:

Be prepared for winter storms by having: a battery-powered radio with extra batteries, extra food that doesn't need cooking (like canned food), rock salt to melt ice and sand to improve traction. Also make sure you have flashlights and batter-powered lamps if the electricity goes off. If you have a fireplace, make sure you have wood.

If you go out in very cold weather, dress in layers. Mittens are warmer than gloves, wear a hat and cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from the cold air. Watch for frost bite. What is frost bite? It happens when your skin is exposed in very cold temperatures or you are not dressed warmly enough. You will have a loss of feeling in that part – usually a finger or toe or the tip of your nose – and it may turn white or pale. Get help right away!

If you get trapped in a blizzard in your car, you should set your lights on flashing, hang a piece of cloth or distress flag from the radio antennae or window. Stay in the car! Do not go out on foot unless you can see a building near by. Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes out of each hour. When the engine is running, open a window slightly. This will protect you from carbon monoxide. You may need to clear snow away from the car's exhaust pipe.

You can use road maps, seat covers and floor mats for warmth. And huddle with the other passengers! Take turns sleeping so one person is always awake when rescuers come.

If you are stranded in a remote area you may need to leave the car on foot after the blizzard passes.

What did you learn?

Name six types of disasters: F _ _ _ _ _

H _ _ _

E _ _ _ _

F

W _ _ _ _ _ S _ _ _ _ _

Name two things that cause floods: (heavy rains, overflowing rivers, ocean waves, snow melt, dams and levee breaks)

What is the name of floods that happen very quickly? (Flash floods)

What is a Flash Flood Warning? (A flash flood is happening. Get to higher ground right away! Tell an adult!)

True or false: It's OK to touch and drink flood waters? (FALSE)

What batter-powered device should you have with you to stay up with the news? (radio)

What is an earthquake? (Shaking, rolling or a sudden shock of the earth's surface)

What two important things should you do during an earthquake? (Drop and cover)

What is another name for an earthquake? (Temblor, quakes, shakers or seismic activity)

What is an aftershock? (A smaller earthquake that follows the main earthquake)

Tornadoes have what kind of a shape? (Funnel)

What is Tornado Alley? (A row of states where tornadoes are common.)

What is a tornado warning? (A tornado has been sighted. See cover right away!)

If a tornado is coming, what should you do? (Seek shelter underground if possible or in a room on the first floor without windows.)

Where do hurricanes form? (Caribbean)

How many hurricane categories are there? (five)

When is hurricane season? (June 1 to November 30)

True or false: You should always stay inside during a hurricane. (True!)

What is good protection for windows during a hurricane? (Storm shutters)

True or false: During a fire, you should stay low to the ground where there is less smoke. (True)

What is frost bite? (It happens when your skin is exposed in very cold temperatures or you are not dressed warmly enough. You will have a loss of feeling in that part – usually a finger or toe or the tip of your nose – and it may turn white or pale. Get help right away!)

If go out in the cold, you should dress is: _ _ _ _ _

Getting Ready for a Disaster

Disaster Supply Kit: Every family should have a Disaster Supply Kit in their home. The kit will help you and your family in case a disaster happens to you. In a hurricane or earthquake, for example, you might be without electricity and the water supply may be polluted. In a heavy winter storm or flood, you may not be able to leave your house for a

few days. In times like this, you will need to rely on yourself. Your disaster supply kit will make it easier. Remember, most families will never need to use their disaster supply kit, but it is always better to be prepared.

Here is a list of what you need to have on hand. It is best if these items are kept in a plastic tub or kept together in a cabinet so they will be easy to find.

Water

Storing water is one of the most important things you can do. In an emergency, water pipes may be broken or the water contaminated. (Contaminated means it is not safe to drink.) Store water in plastic containers. Plastic soft drink bottles are good! Don't use milk cartons or glass bottles. You will need at least two quarts of water for each person in your house for each day. You will also need two quarts per person per day for cooking and hygiene (like brushing your teeth). That means you will need four quarts for each person -- which is one whole gallon! And don't forget extra water for your pets! You should have a three-day supply of water. So you need to multiply one gallon times the number of people in your house and then times that number by three to get the total gallons. Stored water needs to be treated to make sure it will be safe to drink when you need it. You do this by adding four drops of bleach per quart of water. Have an adult do this for you. The liquid bleach should have 5.25 percent sodium hypochlorite and NO SOAP! Seal all bottles tightly so they don't leak.

Food

You will need a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Non-perishable food means food that can stay good for a long time without needing to be in the refrigerator. It is also good if the food doesn't need to be cooked. Here are some suggestions:

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits and vegetables
- Canned juice, milk and soup
- Sugar, salt and pepper
- High energy foods, like peanut butter, jelly, crackers, granola bars, trail mix
- Vitamins
- Fun foods! Like cookies, hard candy, lollipops, instant coffee and tea
- Special food for babies or older people

The food should be kept dry and cool. Cookies and crackers and other items should be in plastic bags.

First Aid Kit

Ask your Mom or Dad or another adult for help in locating or creating your first aid kit. These are the things your first aid kit should have:

- Sterile adhesive bandages of different sizes

- Sterile gauze pads
- Hypoallergenic adhesive tape
- Triangular bandages
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Sewing needle
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Tube of petroleum jelly
- Safety pins
- Soap
- Latex gloves
- Sunscreen
- Aspirin or other pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medicine
- Antacid
- Syrup of Ipecac
- Laxative
- Activated charcoal

Tools and Supplies

There are many things you may need in an emergency or during a disaster. These things should be in a duffle bag or backpack so you can take them with you easily if you have to leave your house.

Here is a list of some of the most important things:

- Mess kits or plates and cups or plates and plastic paper
- Battery-operated radio and extra batteries
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- Non-electric can opener and utility knife (like a Swiss Army knife)
- Fire extinguisher (ABC type)
- Pliers
- Tape
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Aluminum foil
- Signal flares
- Paper and pencils
- Needle and thread
- Shut-off wrench to turn off the gas and water to your house
- Plastic sheeting
- Whistle
- Toilet paper

- Soap
- Household chlorine bleach
- Plastic bucket with a tight lid
- Plastic garbage bags

Clothing and Bedding

Everyone in your house should have a complete change of clothes and a pair of sturdy shoes or boots stored in the disaster kit. You should also have rain gear, thermal underwear and blankets or sleeping bags.

Family Disaster Plan

Every family needs to plan for what might happen. You should sit down with your family and talk about:

- What types of disasters might happen
- What you should do to prepare (like creating your family disaster kit)
- What to do if you are asked to evacuate (which means to leave your home)

You should talk to your family about:

- Where to meet away from your home in case of a fire (like a neighbor's house or the corner of the street);

- Where to meet outside your neighborhood if you must evacuate. You should pick a friend or relative's house;

- Where to call to "check in" if you become separated from your family during a disaster. You should memorize the phone number of a favorite aunt or family member who lives in another state. You would call there to report where you are so your family can find you.

You can also talk with your whole neighborhood about disaster plans. Know if someone in your neighborhood has a special skill -- like being a doctor.

Also, be sure your house has a smoke detector and remember to change the batteries twice a year. It's also a good idea to take a first aid class so you will be prepared to help others.

How To Protect Your Home From Disasters

Disasters happen. There is not much we can do about that. But there are things we can do to protect our homes and reduce the risk that they will be damaged. Reducing the risk is called "mitigation." With mitigation, you might be able to avoid becoming a disaster victim. Although some mitigation is very expensive and complicated -- like moving your

home to a different piece of land that is higher or away from a river – some things are easy. Here are some things you and your family can do to mitigate:

Floods:

Don't put valuable items and appliances in the basement where they are more likely to be flooded.

Power and water don't mix! Have the main breaker or fuse box and the utility meters raised up above the flood level for your area. That way, if your home floods, the water won't damage your utilities.

Buy flood insurance. To learn more about flood insurance, have your parent call 1-800-427-4661.

Hurricanes and Tornadoes:

Don't lose your roof to high winds! Have hurricane straps installed to keep the roof attached to the walls. That way, you may not lose your roof and your home won't get drenched by rain during a hurricane or tornado.

Use storm shutters to protect windows and glass. Use them when severe weather is coming. The storm shutters protect against flying debris like tree trunks or other things carried in strong winds.

Earthquakes:

Bolt or strap cupboards and bookcases to the walls and keep heavy objects on the lower shelves so they don't fall on people.

Strap your water heater to a nearby wall. This will keep your gas water heater from falling on someone or starting a fire from a broken gas main.

Have your home bolted to the foundation. Anchor bolts cost as little as \$2 apiece. They should be installed every six feet on the outer edges of your house.

Wild Fires:

Create a safety zone around the house that separates your home from plants and bushes that can burn easily. Clear dead brush and grass from your property. It will act as fuel for a fire.

Keep branches around your home free of dead or dying wood or moss.

Put tile or flame-retardant shingles on your roof instead of wood shakes or standard shingles. This will cut the chance that burning debris in the air will catch your roof on fire.

What did you learn?

List five things that should be in your Disaster Supply Kit. (link to disaster supply kit list)
What does the term “non-perishable food” mean? (It can last a long time without being refrigerated.)

True or false: Only some families need to have Disaster Supply Kit and Family Disaster Plan? (False)

What does the term “evacuate” mean? (It means to leave your home, neighborhood or town because of a disaster. You only evacuate when told to by officials.)

How many times a year should you change the batteries in your smoke detector? (Twice)

What does the term “mitigation” mean? (It means to take actions that will reduce the risk of your home being damaged.)

Name one mitigation action you could take to reduce risk in your area? (Link to mitigation list)

When you are told to evacuate, what should you do with your pet? Take it with you!

True or false – Disasters always come with warnings. (False)

True or false – Every state in the country is at risk for some kind of disaster. (True)

If you are in a disaster, what can you do to feel better? (Draw pictures, write about it, talk to your parents, help out with chores)

What you might feel during a disaster.

Disaster can happen. They often happen quickly and without warning, and they can be scary for you and your parents. For example, you may have to leave your home and you may not be able to go to school. You may not be able to sleep in your own bed and things may be confusing for a while. It’s important to remember some things:

Disasters don’t last very long. Soon, things will be back to normal.

You can get a new routine if you can’t go home for a while. You will settle down into a new place and you will meet new friends.

Look to your parents or other adults for help when you feel scared or confused. They will help you understand what is happening. Sometimes your parents may be confused, too, but soon they will know what to do. Don’t be afraid to ask questions – like how long will we be in the shelter? Or when will I go back to school?

Sometimes it helps children to write about their experience or to draw pictures about what has happened. You can describe what happened and how you feel. The FEMA for Kids WEB site can post your projects.

It’s OK to cry during a disaster, but remember, it will GET BETTER.

You may be able to help, too. Children of all ages can help in the shelter by babysitting other children or cleaning up or serving food. During a disaster, kids can even help with sandbagging or helping to clean up your house after a tornado or hurricane or earthquake.

Pets and Disasters

Disasters like hurricanes, tornadoes and floods don't just affect you – they also affect your pets. And your pets depend on you for their safety. There are many ways to be “Pet Prepared” but you must think ahead and start planning NOW. Your local Humane Society or your veterinarian can help you. During a disaster, if you see an injured or stranded animal that needs help, tell your parent or adult so they can contact your local animal control officer or animal shelter. And remember, even if you don't have to evacuate, your pet may be stressed or upset and will need extra attention.

If you need to evacuate

If you need to evacuate (leave your home for safer ground) the most important thing is to **TAKE YOUR PET WITH YOU**. Leaving pets behind, even if you try to create a safe place for them, is not the best action. BUT, pets cannot come with you to a Red Cross emergency shelter (unless they are service animals, like dogs for the visually impaired.) Since your pet cannot come to the shelter, you need to plan ahead so you have someplace to take your pet.

Contact hotels or motels outside your immediate area and ask about their policies on accepting pets during an emergency. Keep a list of “pet friendly” places in your emergency kit so you know where to go. If you get advance notice that you will need to evacuate, call and make a reservation at the “pet friendly” places right away!

You can also ask friends or relatives outside the area if they could shelter your pets in an emergency.

Also, prepare a list of boarding facilities and veterinarians who could shelter your animals in an emergency. Keep the list in your emergency kit.

If you have more than one pet, they may be more comfortable if they are kept together, but in an emergency that might not be possible.

If you are under a disaster warning, keep your pets inside with you so you don't have to look for them if you have to evacuate. Make sure they all have their collars and identification tags.

You Portable Pet Disaster Kit

Your pet disaster kit should include:

- Dog food and treats
- Drinkable water in plastic bottles
- Can opener for canned food

Medications and medical records in a waterproof container
Sturdy leashes, harnesses and/or carriers so you can move your pets safely and they can't escape (remember they may be scared and may act different than usual)
Current photos of your pet in case they get lost
The name of your veterinarian
Pet beds and toys, if there is room.

All your pets should have an identification tag and collar, too.

Birds, reptiles and other pets.

Birds should be moved in a secure travel cage or carrier. If the weather is cold, wrap a blanket over the carrier and warm up the car first. During warm weather, carry a plant mister to mist the birds' feathers from time to time. Do not put water in the carrier, but instead put a piece of fruit or vegetables with a high water content. Have a photo for identification. Try to keep the carrier in quiet place, but DO NOT let your pet out as they may fly away in the confusion.

Lizards should be treated like birds.

For snakes, they should be put in a pillowcase when they are evacuated. You will need to put them in a more secure place when you reach the evacuation site. If your snakes require feeding often, carry food with you. And take a water bowl large enough for soaking as well as a heating pad.

Pocket pets, like hamsters or gerbils, should be moved in their secure cages or carriers. Take bedding materials, food bowls and water bottles.

If you must leave your pets behind

It is important to take your pet with you. But if you cannot, make sure your pet can get into a safe, secure room without windows, but with adequate air. (Like a big bathroom). Leave enough food for three days. Having enough water for them is very important. One pet can drink several gallons of water a day. Put water in containers that are not easily knocked over. And leave a faucet dripping into a bathtub or sink (with the drain open!). Leave their favorite bed and toys. Don't confine dogs and cats in the same space. Put a notice on your front door saying where your pets are in the house and a phone number where you will be.

Never, never, never leave your dog tied up outside!